

CHAPTER IPROLOGUE

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With the historical advent of Lord Macauley's Minute, the teaching of English became a significant part of school curriculum. From 1835 to 1937 the teaching of English did not pose any serious problem, because being a medium of instruction, its teaching, in a sense, was carried on by all the teachers (Report Secondary Education Commission, 1952-53). High Motivation, better socio-economic background of students, smaller number of students and some other factors were the reasons for students' high achievement in English before 1937.

After the forties, for various political, social and educational reasons students' performance in English deteriorated. Now it has become a matter of grave concern. It is wellknown that most of the students after six years of schooling hardly gain the required linguistic competencies in English.

It needs little evidence to show that students' achievement in English is poor. The Report of the Secondary Examination, (1971) maintains that several candidates could not write their roll numbers correctly in English. The head examiner (Report, 1971, p. 13) observed, "I am of the opinion that, as a whole, the performance of the candidates is not at all up to the mark".

The findings of a study conducted by Dewal and Ahmed (1971) give a picture of students' level of achievement in English. The study revealed that as many as 62 per cent students, appearing at some of the Board examination centres wrongly used the double-past tense in questions; 75 per cent students used the mark of apostrophe on the word 'yours'. More than 50 per cent student did not have any idea of the use of the tenses.

Students' poor achievement in English is a problem that demands concerted efforts and quick remedy.

It goes without saying that some steps to improve students' performance in English have been taken in Rajasthan, as in other states, by the State Board of Secondary Education and the State Department of Education. In Rajasthan, the State Institute of Language Studies (SILS), since early sixties, has been regularly conducting

courses for the teachers of English in content and methodology of teaching English. The Institute also broadcasts radio lessons for school students. The Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education has also been organising workshops both in the fields of teaching and testing of English.

Most of the states in India have nationalisation boards of textbooks. Their primary function is to publish good textbooks for school students. The Rajasthan Nationalisation Board of Text Books, Jaipur, has published textbooks for the students of classes six, seven and eight. These textbooks are prepared by a board of experts, and are designed on the "structural-situational" approach. It is hoped that these textbooks will facilitate the teaching and learning of English and would help students to improve their achievement.

At the national level the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, is engaged in research, training and material production to improve the teaching of English in Indian schools. The Institute organises every year summer courses in English for lecturers of training colleges and universities. It has

also produced a series of textbooks for schools.

Although bodies like the Boards of Secondary Education, State Institute of Language Studies, Nationalisation Boards of Textbooks and Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages have been zealously organising short orientation courses, refresher courses and workshops for teachers in service and have developed more effective textbooks, workbooks and other teaching aids, their impact on the achievement of students has been rather unimpressive. The reasons are obvious.

There are many teachers who are not conversant with the new methods of teaching English. There are many teachers who are under-qualified and lack subject competence. The observation of Shaplin and Olds (1964, p. 24) is very relevant to Indian situation. They feel that a major crisis in the schools has been <sup>the</sup> persistent shortage of good teachers. It is disheartening to note that only six per cent of higher primary school teachers are graduates and above (The Education Commission Report, 1966 p. 79). The efforts made by different institutions to improve teacher competence and teacher effectiveness have been, to use a trite phrase, a drop in the ocean.

If we look back <sup>to</sup> in the sixties, we witness some giant strides in the field of instructional technology

programmed learning, task analysis, simulation techniques, TV and computer instruction and systems approach. The new instructional techniques have given dependable solutions to the problems of training in industry, business, bank management and military organisations. Education <sup>also</sup> has not been an exception. Educational administrators, during the last few years in the West have become conscious of the potentialities of systems approach (Banghart, 1969).

In India the movement of programmed learning and instructional technology promises a big future to education. Kulkarni (1969, p. 11) holds that "instructional technology has opened a new and a revolutionary area before teachers, administrators and teacher educators". The problem of falling standards can be attacked if the perspective about instruction is broadened. Instead of giving the sole task of classroom instruction to the teacher, if we can plan a total teaching strategy on systems approach and start thinking which function of instruction can be carried out more effectively by a given component, we can hope to improve the output of the students.

Little work has been attempted on the application of <sup>the</sup> systems approach to classroom instruction in India.

The investigator, therefore, decided to take the problem of students' under-achievement in English and study it on systems lines.

The 'systems approach' is heavily quantitative and mathematical. The investigator has avoided all mathematical models and qualifications. The main focus of the study was to develop and implement a teaching strategy on systems lines. The main contribution of the study is to apply <sup>the</sup> systems approach to the problems of classroom instruction.

#### The Design of the Study

An attempt directed towards the improvement of students' performance should address itself to the following three questions:-

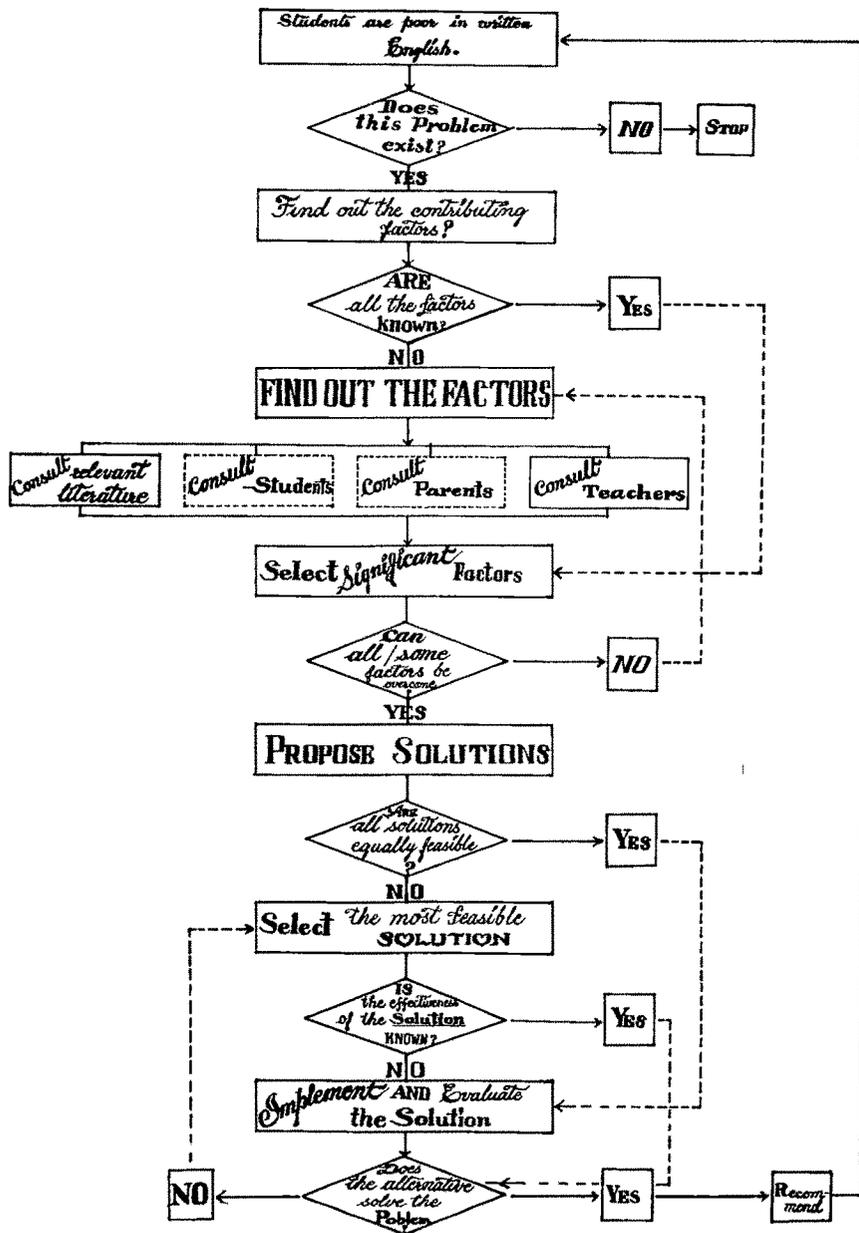
- a) What are those factors which are hindering the achievement of students?
- b) Is there any solution which can eliminate some of these factors?
- c) What is the empirical validity of the proposed solution?

This study is an attempt to answer these three questions given above.

The line of approach which the investigator has adopted is systems oriented. Flow Chart No. 1 depicts

# Chart Showing FLOW Of Decision Paths Of This Study

(A Systems Perspective)



----- path not followed.

the way which the investigator has followed in this study.

The first step is the perception of the problem. The investigator feels that there is a problem of students' under-achievement in English. If there is no problem, there is no need to take up a study. But the research report (Dewal and Ahmed, 1972) ~~reports~~ and other comments made by different persons (Report of Secondary Examination, 1972, Pillai, 1969) and the personal experience of the investigator as a teacher of English convinced the investigator that the problem exists.

The first step in an attempt to find a solution to a problem is to locate and identify the factors which are responsible to the existence of the problem. If all the factors are known, no work to identify them need be undertaken. In this case, the contributing factors are not known. As such the investigator found out the possible and probable factors.

Different persons have different perceptions about the nature of factors that constitute a problem. Students, parents and teachers, all, have different perception about factors which are responsible for students' poor achievement in English. To interview and collect

data from students, teachers and parents about factors which they consider to be significant in students performance, is a task which can separately form a subject for a doctoral work. The investigator, therefore, consulted only the teachers in finding out the main factors contributing to the students' under-achievement in English.

It is but natural that when a mass of data is collected, one has to be selective. The investigator in this study therefore selected only the significant factors (called ~~as~~ difficulties in this study) on the basis of a criterion developed by the researcher.

The second main step in the process of solving the ~~a~~ problem <sup>was</sup> ~~is~~ to explore some alternatives and solutions that ~~may~~ <sup>might</sup> contribute to the solution of the problem.

While exploring solutions, one has to look at the environmental constraints. There may be a solution which promises to solve the problem, but the solution may not be acceptable or may not be economically or socially or technically feasible. Under such conditions a systemist ( a person using the systems approach) would select only those solutions or alternatives which he considers to be feasible.

The next step in this study was to select some feasible solution which could overcome difficulties in teaching and learning English and help students to perform better. The solution offered was PROGRAMMED TEACHING.

The effectiveness of a solution or an alternative cannot be taken for granted on a priori assumption. For that one has to implement the solution and see how it works. The next step in this study was to implement the solution offered and experimentally evaluate its efficacy.

Flow Chart 1 gives the flow of steps undertaken by the investigator. The dotted lines depict the loop not followed in the study.

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